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Nagel, Charles

“Immigration”

[Minneapolis]

[1921]

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"Immigration"

Speech of
Hon. Charles Nagel
of St. Louis, Mo.

308

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Box 123



Delivered at the Annual Meeting of
**THE CITIZENS ALLIANCE
OF MINNEAPOLIS**

March 21, 1921

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Immigration

*Address by Hon. Charles Nagel, Secretary of
Labor and Commerce under President Taft*

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

In accepting an invitation of this kind a speaker always assumes a certain responsibility. I confess in this case it is greater than I had been prepared for. When I hear that hope is entertained as to the willingness of the ladies to return next year, I feel that an unexpected responsibility has been put upon the shoulders of the speakers of this evening. Even without that, the introduction is bad enough for the speaker. I know of no one who could measure up to the description, and I shall have to again depend upon the generosity of an American audience that has seen me through so many difficulties.

Indeed, nothing impresses me more at this particular time in our country than the splendid magnanimity of the American people, a characteristic upon which I have always depended. I would be frank with you, as I always endeavor to be when addressing an audience. It is an old saying with me, that if I could not speak with the same frankness with which I can speak in my home circle I would not take the platform.

It has not always been comfortable for some of us during the past years, but I have answered that the generosity of the American people and its magnanimity will certainly meet the situation when the proper time comes. Nothing has surprised me so much as the reception which has been accorded me during the last six months; unless it be that audiences have been glad to listen to a discussion of the particular subject which has been assigned to me this evening. It is a subject which I treat from an angle of my own.

From my early youth I have felt that one great danger in our country was a too strong inclination to deal with the material issues, not always intelligently in my opinion, but still with them first in mind; and I have felt that the salvation of my country depended upon bringing together the material issues and the humane questions. They must be combined. Heart and mind must be made one if we are to be a sound people. The greatest man this country ever produced was a man whose mind was always driven by his heart to grapple with the conditions and the problems that confronted him; and he was Abraham Lincoln. We shall have to do that thing.

Many times during my short political experience I found, as I thought, the proof of my contention. I have seen that force alone accomplishes little. There must be something more than that, and we ought to be willing to believe that now. During this late struggle we heard constantly about the suppression of this, that and the other thing. I agree, suppression there must be, but not suppression alone. As has been said, so long as the policeman gets more compensation than the teacher in the public schools there is something wrong in our institutions.

We speak of the "reds". There are plenty of them; you know more about that than I do; but let me tell you that I am not afraid of willful wrongdoers. What I fear is the right-minded man with distorted ideas. That is our problem. There are certain people in this country who are confused. They have been confused because they have not been understood and they have not understood us. The contest is between the willful wrongdoers and the right-minded people. The question is who will invade that zone and who will win those people that are in that confused state of mind.

Much can be done without force. I have to use my own experiences because I am compelled to rely upon them. I remember during one of our great strikes where, as deputy sheriff, I organized seventy-five men, who were all sworn in at once. This company had something to do with restoring order in our community, but we did not do it all with the gun. We had riot guns, yes, and we had it understood that we knew how to use them if necessary. But our idea was to use the gun just as rarely as possible.

We were sent to a section which was regarded as most dangerous, a point where great atrocities had been committed, and headquarters told us that that night meant a fight. I said: "Perhaps it will, but my men will not fire unless I give the order, and that order will not be given if it can possibly be avoided." We were sent to that quarter, and there was great indignation because my men had been put into khaki uniforms and they had come to stay until the disorder was over. Men remonstrated with me, they insisted I had United States soldiers there. I talked it out with them, and before we left that point we had the little boys in the neighborhood out in the street, drilling them to the amusement of their parents, and we heard the "Hep, hep, hep," all over those squares. The young girls came out and promenaded with the boys of my company.

There was never another sign of a strike in that neighborhood. The cars started to run that night and they never stopped during that strike. We had the force, yes, we might have done much mischief with it; we might have had to use it to accomplish good; but it is my contention that force must always be used with that self-restraint and judgment which characterized the master mind of true Americanism, Abraham Lincoln.

That question has been accentuated in our country. We have the problem now presented to us, I think, with more force and more imminent danger than ever before. People have tried to make themselves believe that nothing has happened, and that we are to go back to the conditions we had before the war. Ladies and gentlemen, we have had a very serious war, and in my judgment the consequences of the war are just beginning. Let us not deceive ourselves. When men say to me that we are going back to normal times, I say to them that many of the things we have thought normal in the past will be abnormal from now on. A change has come over the world, and we are part of the world from now on. The word "democratization" has been thrown upon the international screen until all the peoples of the earth have seen it, and they think they understand it. Many of them do not understand it, and we cannot sit by with folded hands. It will be for us to guide and interpret its meaning, and lead the people aright; and that means responsibility.

That reminds us of what Disraeli said to Englishmen many years ago when he charged that the nobility "had preserved their prerogatives but had forgotten their obligations". We must be reminded of our obligations, because for our own salvation and the salvation of our country we must guide these people, have them understand us and we must understand them. We cannot live aloof, and we cannot live under a mere class system in a republic.

We may just as well admit that we have been in the habit of living upon slogans and phrases. We thought that because we have political liberty all questions were answered. Great Britain lived in the same belief; forgot that there is an industrial interpretation of the constitution, and that political liberty does not answer in itself the industrial problems. Those are our real questions and we have got to meet them.

In the past every campaign brought out a new slogan. One time it was co-operation, another time it was,—I do not know whether we ever used "salvation" or not, but we might as well,—in this campaign we had democratization. In the past we had conservation. We defeated one candidate with that and it never was talked about again. We have had self-determination, and now we have Americanization.

You know I have suspicion of long words; they always suggest camouflage to me. I like the crisp, terse, clear and direct Anglo Saxon word, that is used by men who know what they want to say, and who are willing to be understood by the people who listen to them. As long as the word or the slogan has six syllables I know that the speaker wants to use a word under which every one can imagine what he pleases, and no one can be held to any responsibility for what he says.

That is a weakness of the political system with us. I have been in politics and I am talking as much about myself as others, although I am now out for good. But that is our weakness. We have candidates running for office upon platforms or phrases of which no one has ever thought before; and they seem to believe and they want people to believe that because no one has ever been wise enough to think of those things before therefore they must be good, and they rely upon them. After having been elected and not taking office until six months thereafter, the candidate counts upon our short political memories and knows that we will have forgotten what he said.

That is an impossible situation. We must reconcile our political system with our industrial and social problems. We must Americanize; but Americanization is not to be had by the mere declaration or by mere recitation, or by mere memorizing of the Constitution, or by answering any perfunctory questions in court. Americanization goes right down to the hearts and the souls of people; if it does not the process has not been had.

You may say, what has that to do with immigration? Immigration lies at the very threshold of the whole system. In a sense we are all immigrants. After all we are a very new country, but we are now responsible for this country, and it is therefore for us to determine what policy of immigration is safe for the immediate future. The past is done; we are here. We live together. If the country is to survive we must take the responsibility of determining who is fit from now on.

I have been asked what I think about the one year embargo, or the two year embargo upon immigration. I say I care naught about it, it is nothing but a shift. We had five or six years to think of that question, when we had no immigration, and then we did not think; and now we are asking for another year in which to begin to think. It is simply a shift that amounts to nothing; it is no answer to the problem.

Then what do you think of this or that policy. I say I think more of the spirit of the law than I do of its letter. There is no branch of the administration in which it is more essential to interpret the law humanely. Why? Because these people come to our shores with hopes and great expectations, and what do they receive? I was in charge of that branch of the administration for four years. I do not speak in disrespect of my subordinates; on the contrary I speak with a sense of profound indebtedness to them, but I speak with a great deal of distrust of the law under which we had to operate.

These people come to the ports; they are handled in masses; there are few officials that understand their languages. The newcomers are sent from side to side, very

much as cattle are assorted. There is little in the treatment of those people after they arrive, that would confirm the promise of the Statue of Liberty which they have just passed.

You may say that is mere sentimental consideration. I say to you that there is the foundation of unrest, and that is what we have to deal with in this country. The first impression that the new people receive is the most important impression. If they come with a feeling of confidence, look to us as representatives of a new idea, contrary to the oppression which they have suffered abroad, and we meet them in that spirit, then we have laid the foundations of good citizenship. If they start with the impression that they are meeting here under our Stars and Stripes the same kind of a system with which they have contended abroad, then they start discouraged.

I cannot help but give you some instances to show you what I mean. The law is crude. As the law stands it deals with the individual alone. Every single individual that arrives is subjected to the test of our law. They are not treated as a family; but they are treated, from the father to the youngest baby, as individuals, and subjected to the test of the law, which means physical, oral and mental fitness; and only if they pass the test are they admitted.

Now that is a crude law; it is a cruel law. It is aimed at the family, which is the foundation of the state. It means separation, a tearing asunder at the port, if there is not any one strong enough to meet that situation; and very often he cannot because the law is mandatory. I am not here to tell you touching stories; but it is time for us to see how much there is in the stories of the poor people that is touching, how hard are the problems that those people have to meet, and how much we can do to help them meet those problems. Let me give you a few cases.

I used to go to these stations, I visited every immigration station in the United States while I was Secretary. I knew most of the men and women responsible for their administration. I knew the conditions of the people, and I made many a long trip to look into a particular case.

At one time a commissioner who was a very effective man, upon whom I relied implicitly,—my own selection for the place,—told me that he had a Scandinavian woman there whom he thought I ought to see. She was brought in. She looked like a statue. She did not speak. She stood there white as a sheet, without saying a word, unless it be in silent contempt, you have done all you can, you cannot do to me anything that can hurt. Her story was this.

She had arrived about two weeks before with two children. The children had measles and were taken away from her by the New York state authorities to quarantine.

She, not having the measles, was separated from her children and taken by the Federal authorities to Ellis Island. That woman did not understand it; but the first thing she did understand was that both children had died and were buried. That is the reason she had nothing to say to us; and the question was whether this woman should now be deported because she was in danger of losing her mind, and becoming a burden upon the United States. Her husband was outside waiting to see her, he had come all the way from Chicago.

That was one of those occasions when I may have broken the law; I do not know. I do not think I did. I know I observed its spirit. I said if I believed that this woman had to be sent back I would rather drown her, because I knew she would become insane. There was only one way to save her and that was to take her to her husband. That was my order, and she was taken to her husband at once. I told them that if they found any difficulties about the law I would send for a Philadelphia lawyer to show me how I did it. (Applause.)

I am a conservative man; I am a law and order man. I think we are perhaps too careless. Perhaps it is a dangerous thing for me to say these things; but that is the spirit of the law, and that woman was saved. If I had sent her back, would her husband have been anything but an anarchist? What would you have been if it had happened to you?

I remember a case in Baltimore. A man came to me and said that his wife and three children had come over and two of them had been rejected. The oldest child was about seven years old, and two of them had been rejected, a boy and a girl, on account of a contagious scalp trouble. The poor man was wringing his hands. He had been in this country for three years and had a good record in Columbus, Ohio. I remember I began to be uneasy about my own decision, and asked my wife to go with me to look at those children.

She went with me. The doctor's certificate was absolute, and that meant I had to reject them. After an interview with him he said he thought they might be cured. I said: "Change your certificate and send them to a specialist." They were sent first to a local hospital and finally under proper protection to Columbus where they were again treated by a specialist; and after eight months he reported that these children were absolutely cured, and they were allowed to go home with their father and mother.

A year or so afterwards I received a letter from the little girl with her photograph and that of her brother. She said about this: "My dear Secretary: We pray for you every night. If you had not come to Baltimore probably I would have been sent back to the old country. We now go to

the public school and you see I can write English a little," and she signed her name. There was gratitude for you. I took the photograph home to my wife and said: "These are the children you saw in Baltimore, I think they are better looking than ours." Of course, I am not reflecting on my own children; but they were fine looking, I say those people were Americanized; and if those two children had been sent back to a fate infinitely more cruel than anyone dares imagine, those people might have become anarchists; not only they but all the people they knew, because their confidence in our institutions would have been shattered.

Now again I say I do not want to be sentimental about it, but a law like that is impossible. We ought to take the whole family, the good and the bad, or reject the family. To separate the family at the port is to break asunder the very foundation of our system. You say, what policy should we adopt? There are those who believe that immigrants should be permitted to come in as they always have come. I do not agree. I want my country to be safe first, and to make it safe we have a right to adopt any policy that is necessary to that end.

If I were an internationalist I would take my chances, but I am a nationalist. I might dream about free trade, but I do not believe my country can prosper if absolute free trade is adopted. Many abstract principles have to suffer modification in actual practise. I was opposed to the League of Nations because I did not want to subject my country to the domination of any other power or combination of powers (applause); and I do not want by indirection to have that result accomplished.

Furthermore, I would not predicate any policy of immigration upon the mere industrial necessities of my country. I say no man or woman is fit to come to this country who does not show fitness for ultimate citizenship in the United States. (Applause.) This country would not prosper or survive if we once learn to depend upon a working class as a constant perpetuating status. We have got to teach ourselves, and live the idea, that we, as American citizens, are capable of doing our own work and are willing to do it, because that is the only way work will ever be dignified.

If there are races that mean friction in our midst, why should we indulge in abstract fancies and admit them? I know it is well enough to write theories about it, it is well enough to write poetry about it—and the poet might ultimately be the best legislator, although it takes him a long time to prove it,—but in the meantime I want to do the safe thing for my own country. So I say, if there be races that we cannot admit without friction and turmoil, it is just to them and it is safe to us, to say so frankly and to establish our relations in other respects as best we may.

We have that problem in our midst, why multiply it? The Negro is with us. It is not his fault that he is here. We have the responsibility. We have given him constitutional equality, but we are denying him an industrial chance, at least in the greater part of the country. That is problem enough for one nation and a very grave one. That problem is no nearer solution, in my judgment, than it was in 1861.

These problems cannot be regulated by law or banished by declarations or phrases in platforms. We might as well make up our minds that phrases are not going to answer our problems any longer. We have been great believers in mere laws. We have legislated happiness for everybody. We have tried to make all business good by telling it what it must do, rarely ever telling it what it might do; and we have gone along in the sweet belief that a multitude of laws would redound to our happiness and our comfort.

Why, we have so many laws in this country that if we tried to observe them we know we couldn't be happy. If any lawyer tried to read and reconcile the laws of his own state he would land in an asylum. That is the method we have adopted; loaded down with laws and overwhelmed with decisions, and no one knows for six months what the policy will be. If I had any advice to give in Washington I would say that it is as important to have a certain policy announced to live by, as it is to waste time in finding the right one. I used to say a bad decision today may be better than a good one six months from now, because the citizen concerned might die in the meantime.

That is the situation today. There is no use in attempting to answer our questions by passing laws. We must have some laws, yes; but we have been in the habit of answering every question with a new law. Most wounds must be treated from the inside, and cannot be treated with plaster.

But immigration is only one phase of it. After the people are here, what ought we to do with them? I think in that respect our policy should be changed. I think we ought to inspect prospective immigrants on the other side, because in doing that we would save them great losses, and ourselves the embarrassments of almost impossible situations after they are here. Humanity and the terms of the law conflict so in some of those cases that it is really difficult to know what to do. The only difficulty about inspection on the other side, and I will be frank, is this,—who is going to control the inspector? If we had a government far enough advanced to dare to employ experts and not politicians that difficulty would be met; but if our appointments continue to be made as they have been I would hate to be bound by the result of an inspection on the other side.

That is a serious problem. A republic necessarily has to face that difficulty. That is not a reflection upon anybody. I am sorry for the executive who is trying to serve the will of the people. He has got to do it, he cannot play a lone hand. He has got to be a representative man, and as a rule he is not given a fair chance by the very people who are complaining. I say that because I am out of office for good. (Laughter.)

Let me illustrate further to you. The law now provides for what is called a literacy test. I fought that and my President vetoed it. Why did I oppose it? Because I said it was not a fair test and would bring no good results. It was not a fair test because I care more for the man who has a hard hand than for the educated scoundrel. You cannot protect yourself against the greatest danger that threatens us in admitting that class of people. I would rather have an honest eye and a hard hand without ability to read, than I would the black sheep that were advisedly sent to us by foreign countries during all these years.

What does the law provide now? They modified it, and they said, if anybody can speak any kind of a dialect he can be admitted. I think they have some thirty dialects that they recognize. If the father can read he can bring in his whole family although none of them can read; and if the father cannot read it excludes all the family although they can all read. In that instance the family idea prevails. The result is that a father who has had a good chance, and has an education, but whose children were given no schooling, brings them all in; while the poor father who was denied an education, but saw to it that his family were educated keeps them all out. Can a law reasonably contemplate a result like this?

Now, consider the inspection at the port. Thirty dialects, I think there are. We pride ourselves upon understanding only one language. For a time here you know it was almost an offense to speak more than one language. So they have to have thirty different kinds of interpreters there in Ellis Island to investigate all these people and to determine whether they understand a language or not. I say, who is going to investigate the interpreters? The commissioner does not ordinarily speak anything but English, the assistant commissioner probably does not; there is nobody there to control our inspection. In effect it may become, if it survives, the greatest graft machine that was ever invented. It may result in compensation for the privilege of coming in without any danger of detection.

I am not criticizing; but I can speak one language besides English, and that is German. I did not have a chance to speak English until I was twelve years old, although born in this country. I remember the first English sentence I learned to speak. I never lived in a more highly educated

community than I did then. They were largely college-bred men that had gone into the wilds in that far-away colony, and there they were. But I can now speak German, and when I went into these different stations and listened to those interpreters I thought I would hate to risk my neck upon those investigations.

They were the best you could get; but if you want to interpret the language of the immigrants you must learn to talk their idiom. Your book does not help you. You have got to know the peculiarities of the language they use; you have got to understand something about their country or you cannot understand them, any more than a doctor can understand a patient if he does not know the conditions under which the patient lives. That is what I mean by the humanitarian side of immigration.

After we have them here it is our idea that all we have to do is to deny them naturalization papers if we do not like them. I do not think that is right. Naturalization has been granted in the past in a superficial fashion. It is crude enough now. I go into the courts now and then to see how it is done. Some great big Hungarian or Bohemian will go on the stand, hard hands, etc.; and a dapper little fellow in patent leather shoes will ask: "What is your name?" So and so. "Are you a socialist?" "No." "Anarchist?" "No." "Communist?" "No." "Bolshevik?" "No." "You don't believe in those things?" "No." And it is all over. Neither of them has the faintest idea what any one of those terms mean. (Laughter.)

Then perhaps, as I have seen it done, the young representative of the government will step up to the court and hand in some secret report; the court will read the report and hand it back to the young man and tell the applicant for naturalization that his application is denied; and the poor fellow will not even know what he is charged with. He has had no chance to meet the charge, he does not know what it is about. It might have been intended for an entirely different man.

It has been asked me whether in this country a man's whole life can be passed upon in this fashion; and I have answered that I have seen it done by perfectly reputable judges. That man is with us; he has been denied his papers but he is with us; and do you suppose he will be a friend of the government? Why, he will make more anarchists for us than he ever thought of making before; he thinks he has a just grievance because he has had no chance. He is with us and he helps to make sentiment.

We talk about the vote. I certainly believe in the vote; and I believe everybody ought to vote and ought to vote intelligently. But look at the last election, what was it? Was it a record of millions of well-considered decisions by so many citizens? Why, it was a mass sentiment that ex-

pressed itself. I say it was the greatest demonstration of political unrest I ever saw in my life. This time the unrest went in the right direction and we liked it; but now the President wonders how to interpret that unrest, and he has that responsibility.

That is the situation. Those people are still with us. They are part of our working force, they are in our factories. They may own property, but they cannot vote. They have a grievance and we put them in a frame of mind that we do not want. I am not easy on immigration. I am a law and order man. If they are not entitled to naturalization I do not want them to have it. I want the unfit man or woman rejected in the immigration office or in the naturalization court; but have them understand why they are admitted or why they are rejected. It is the reason of the thing that has got to be given them.

If you have any doubt about what I mean, go to your police courts and see how people are handled. I do not know whether you have exceptional methods here, but I have seen the kind I mean. Those are the places in which the mass of the people come in contact with the government. They do not fight over property because they do not have any; they fight over personal matters. How are they handled? No cattle dealer would allow his cattle to be handled the way these people are handled in some of our lower courts, because the cattle would lose too much in weight.

That is not an exaggeration, and it presents a real problem. That is the way "the other side" lives; and until we understand how the other side lives they will not understand us, and we cannot have that peace which we need, that co-operation which we need. You may think I am exaggerating this, but it is based upon my observations through many years.

I remember when I was acting mayor of my city. I had seen the House of Refuge. I saw how the policemen brought in the youngsters and how they went in on the mere recommendation of the officers. All the mayor was expected to do was to sign, and that sealed the fate of the youngster. I shall never forget one case where an officer brought in a boy. He said he was a bad boy: "House of Refuge." Just that way, that was all. I said: "Let's see." I said to the boy: "Where do you live?" He gave me a number. The policeman said: "He lies. I have been there and he does not live there." The boy broke down and insisted that he did live there.

He impressed me and I said: "Mr. Officer, that boy will not be sent to the House of Refuge until I personally satisfy myself whether he lives there or not." After office hours I went down to that section of the city. By the merest accident I met a man who told me that a boy that went by the name of "Cotton-Head" had not come home last night.

I found a little girl and asked her whether she knew "Cotton-Head" and she said: "Yes, he is my brother and he got lost last night and my mother is crazy about it." He had not done anything but had played out during the hot summer night. I returned him to his mother and there never was another complaint about him. In those days if he had gone to the House of Refuge, he would have been thrown with some real criminals, and he might have come out on the wrong side of the ledger.

We have got to see to it that these people get on the credit side and not on the debtor side; because if they get on the credit side they are a source of support and if they get on the debtor side they are a source of distress. That may be a crude way of putting it. It takes altruism to make the thing go. We cannot live upon altruism alone; but there must be some of it or we cannot succeed.

There is still another view. We are different than other people; our nation is differently made up. We are not one race, we are many races. We are a composite people, we are a nation in the making and we have to bear with each other. We have not always done that. I feel that much of the trouble we had during the war or just before, was attributable to the fact that we were not acquainted with each other. If we had known in 1915 and 1916 what the boys and young women proved to us in 1917 when the war came, there never would have been any misunderstanding in this country, because there was never a more splendid response to a nation's call than there was in this country when it came.

There were differences, as there had been earlier in our history. I remember the Civil War very well. I lived in one of those colonies where the people were nearly all Germans or Bohemians. My father and mother were naturalized citizens. Rhodes in his history says, as I remember it, that was the only section south of the Mason and Dixon line where people were ostracized for holding slaves. That was our place of abode. You could not hold a slave and live there, at least not on pleasant terms. Then the Civil War came. My father was a Union man, and, as I have often said, the whole State of Texas could not make him break his oath of allegiance to the Stars and Stripes. It took a real naturalized citizen to do that. He had to flee and I fled with him to old Mexico.

But before that we saw Confederate soldiers many times, and no Confederate soldier ever did us harm. They would stop at our house and sit before the fire and crack pecans, show us pictures of their wives or sweethearts and josh the old gentleman about being a Union man. But after the man in gray left then we had trouble with the stay-at-home heroes. You know the stay-at-home hero is always bolder than the man who carries the gun, especially when it comes to passing judgment on his neighbors.

At the front when the war came on, we never asked a man where he came from. When those men fell in Mexico we never asked that question. Their bodies were sent to Brooklyn and President Wilson could weep over their coffins, but he could not pronounce their names. Still they were Americans, they died for the Stars and Stripes. There were no such questions asked in France. Many soldiers went from our families; and we have had a chance to inquire. Such questions were not asked at the front, they should not be asked at home; and they will not, after this, because we have gotten acquainted with each other. We are learning the lessons of toleration and self-restraint. We know it means mutual respect, and mutual respect means co-operation; all members of one nation,—the United States.

You know what Lincoln said upon that subject. You remember in his debates, when Douglas was interpreting the Declaration of Independence and, in a restrained way, really brought out the race issue, it was Lincoln who came forward and said: "that when the Declaration of Independence was written a large percentage of the people now here were not in this country. When they came they could not claim that their ancestors had participated in the making of that great document. However, they came, the Irish, the Scotch, the German, the Swede, the Jew, etc., and when these men read the Declaration of Independence they could establish no relationship with the great men who had written it; but when they read its principles of equality they found the relationship in that principle. Those people then had a right to feel that they were blood of the blood and flesh of the flesh with the men who had written the Declaration. It was the electrical cord that bound together all men who loved freedom, and that will forever bind together all men and women who are willing to live and die for the liberty of the world."

That was Abraham Lincoln. No other man has ever stood for the idea of union as he has. He was the champion of the union of the states and he preserved that union. He was the champion of a united people, and he managed as no other man had up to that time, to get behind him all the different races of the North to sustain him in his great struggle. He was the greatest typical American that ever sat in the President's chair (applause), because he rose from the lowest to the highest and as power grew in his hands he became more restrained in its use, more fearful that his power might be used to do injustice to another.

I have often said his life would never be written, his portrait would never be painted, and no cast will ever give the idea of Lincoln that has been impressed upon the hearts and the souls of the American people. So comprehensive was his strength and his virtue that no critic can grasp it, no man can describe it, no play can give it. Even Drinkwater's play, which I think every one ought to see, and

which is a remarkable production for an Englishman of an American president like Lincoln; even in that play I should say that the most impressive scene is the one where Abraham Lincoln is asleep in the tent of the commander; and Grant comes to find him asleep, and gently draws the blanket up over him to keep him from the cold. The light is low, no word is spoken, and the imagination is given full sway to picture the ideal of the people. It is not language, it is not any attempted definition; his life is like great music which is understood by the mass of the people, which a critic may seize upon to speak of this or that in comment, but which he never wholly grasps because the great note that the people hear, was impressed upon them and is understood by them alone. It is for that reason that the American people recognize Abraham Lincoln, as he always understood them, best.

He was the real American and in his spirit we have got to live on together. When we speak of Americans we do not want to say: "I am the true American; if you want to get anywhere, imitate me." That is veneration. You cannot teach Americans in that way; you have got to seize upon the souls of the people who have got to be made part of us. You cannot win any people by having them believe that we are giving always, and they are receiving always; because no permanent system can be built upon charity. If they are worth having and they are to live with us, they must feel that they are making a contribution to the system from which they derive their happiness. I think we have been rather complacent in assuming that we have so much more to give than other people have. It is surprising how much some of those people know, and how much the history of some of these old races has to contribute.

I remember at one time in Washington I sent my secretary to buy some horses. The price was agreed upon. He took the money but he came back without the horses; and he explained that as he was about to complete the bargain a Greek stepped up and pulled out of his pocket more money than the government had for that purchase. I said: "Well, now, that is too bad." He said, "It is not bad for the horses." I said, "How do you make that out?" "Well," he said, "you know, a Greek never strikes a horse. Whenever you see a Greek peddler you will find that his horses are always in better condition than anybody else's." I said, "That would go to show that we might learn something from a Greek, provided he has not been Americanized." (Laughter.)

In other words, that is the contribution that he can make to real Americanism. So can the Italian, so have the French, so have the Dutch, so have the Germans, and the Swedes and Norwegians and the Danes, and so forth. Why deceive ourselves? Instead of closing our eyes to facts, let us have them wide open and see how much these people can do; and then realize how much more they will do when they find that we appreciate and understand them;

because understanding and toleration is the basis of the whole thing.

We are bound to come to our own type. That does not mean that all the races must intermarry, it means that there will be an understanding. I know there are people who say we ought to be divided into racial groups. Somebody not long ago insisted that there ought to be a representation of races in Washington, and he singled out the German element. I took the position that that is absolutely impossible. If you have a race grouping of that kind you would have to have perhaps thirty members of the cabinet, because there are about that many groups here. But that would not be the worst part of it. If they were selected upon that theory, they would go to Washington and fight over foreign affairs and forget all about our own problems; and that would be disastrous.

We have got to accept the other idea; which is that whenever an American is selected for a position he represents Americans, and if he does not represent them all he is not entitled to the office. If he is a true American it makes no difference where he hails from. I have said many times that I cannot prove my patriotism by spelling my name wrongly or pronouncing it wrongly, and you would not ask me to deny my father and mother. I want everyone to feel proud of his ancestry. Every race has something to contribute, and that is the one true basis of patriotism.

When that grouping was suggested I said, "What will become of me? I am of German descent, and my wife is of English descent. Where would we go? We have five children, where do they belong?" But we are getting to be one people. Looking out at this audience, it is different from any other audience in the world. You cannot tell where these people come from, but you know they are Americans. You go to our public schools and it is unlike any other system, and we know that those children, under the influence of their teachers, are the greatest Americanizers we have in the United States, because they go home and teach their parents how to be Americans. (Applause.)

You go to our court-rooms and you see it; and you never saw it more clearly shown than you did by our boys who went to the front during this war. It was not a new thought with me; but I was proud to have it confirmed during this war. Many times have I seen our men marching or traveling by in trains, looking out of the windows, sometimes singing and sometimes silent. I have seen English soldiers and French and German and Austrian and Italian and Canadian, but I have never seen anything like the American soldier. He is unlike any soldier in the world, he is a type of his own. See how proudly his head sits on his shoulders, in a way all our own. There is a poise about him and a look. There is restraint; he is American still but subject to command. He presents an individuality of his own and that, ladies and gentlemen, is my conception of America. (Continued applause.)

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